

AN AFTERNOON OUTING FOR TOADSTOOLS.

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THE rainy days of the second week in August were just in time to revive the sinking hopes of the constant few among the members of the Boston Mycological Club, who had been striving, despite the parching drought of July, to find toadstools enough to maintain the interest of the regular Saturday exhibitions at Horticultural Hall. They had almost given up their efforts, which had been rewarded by only a few of the commonest species, so often exhibited that visitors to the exhibitions began to tire of them. Memories of moister seasons of a few years ago, when the last week of July saw the tables gay with seventy-five to a hundred species, seemed unreal, and unreliable as a basis for present expectation. For such is the way with the fleshy fungi. Given moisture, they fruit abundantly; denied it, they fruit stingily or not at all, and leave us to wait perhaps until the year comes round again for a sight of the full range of species.

Coming from the New Hampshire hills, where, in spite of lack of rain, toadstools had been gathered in great variety, if not in great abundance, some of us were unwilling to accept the prevalent attitude of discouragement. Inviting, therefore, a despairing friend or two, we started on the afternoon of August tenth, with the mercury in the nineties, for the Blue Hill region.

Though formerly somewhat inaccessible, except about Blue Hill itself, this region is now opened to visitors in its eastern extent by the electric railroad, which, leaving the Neponset River at Milton Lower Mills, passes up Randolph Avenue directly through the heart of the Metropolitan Reservation, between Chickatawbut and Hancock Hills. At various points along the line the fungus hunter may find good collecting, for there are numerous low slopes and hollows that are moist at almost any time, and the swamps and bogs lying south of the range, about Great Pond in Braintree, and to the east of Ponkapog, can be reached by a longer ride and in the latter case by a moderately long walk.

The higher stony ground, especially where tumbled boulders and broken rock lie exposed on southern slopes, should be avoided by timid explorers. For such places are inhabited or haunted by rattlesnakes, that still are numerous enough to make a word of caution necessary. Though numbers of these reptiles are killed every year, they still thrive in limited areas, and the chance of meeting a strag-

gler, who has perhaps come down to low ground for water, or for a frog or two, is still to be reckoned with. Twice within the last few years I have met a rattlesnake in the region about Chickatawbut hill; in neither case, however, was there really any danger, and in neither case did the snake survive the encounter.

On this hot August afternoon our party left Milton about two o'clock. In twenty minutes or so we were to all appearances far in the country. Resisting the temptation to alight and take the empty one-horse "barge" or "team" that stood waiting above Tucker's hill to take us or any one to Houghton's Pond—south of which, it may be noted, stretches a broad extent of low ground, well wooded, to Ponkapog Pond, a region that usually well repays a visit—we rode on to the nameless point that marks the limit of the first five-cent fare.

Striking into the young, hard-wood growth on the east of the road we began, though on unpromising ground, to find toadstools immediately. The first species to be seen was *Lactarius volemus*, common enough, but always interesting in the woods. Some of the older specimens had the margins turned up, showing the gills, and the surface of the pileus was much cracked. Near by was a single large specimen of Peck's *Lactarius corrugis*, allowing an instructive comparison of the two species, which are very closely related. The latter, as its author says, is darker, and characterized by the variously wrinkled pruinose-pubescent pileus. It is fairly abundant in rather dry deciduous woods in a few places in the Reservation. More conspicuous than the Lactarii was *Boletus alveolatus*, numerous fruits of which thrust their shiny red caps well above the leaves, some of which, however, stuck fast to the viscid surface. Though not well known farther north, this red Boletus, with its rough, lacerated, red and yellow stem, covered with a raised network of coarse, stiff ridges, is familiar in woods about Boston, and is not improbably common throughout eastern Massachusetts. The blood red of the young pileus gives place to some yellow in more mature fruits. The young pores, of a deep rich red, are frequently covered with drops of moisture. The flesh changes quickly to blue, and the pore surface is often irregularly pitted, characteristics which, with the very rough stem, identify the plant with that which Frost described as *Boletus alveolatus* B. & C. By that name it seems convenient to refer to it, pending a revision of the synonymy of this group of the genus. Associated with these interesting species were *Boletus chromapes*, always attractive by its

coloring, and *B. ornatipes*, which in the rough, coarse reticulations of its yellow stem vies with *B. alveolatus*.

Treating with scant attention a few dried-up specimens of the ubiquitous *Russula foetens*, and a single well-fruited *R. furcata*, and pausing a moment by a stump to gather one or two small fruits of *Cantharellus aurantiacus* of the pallid variety figured by Cooke, which seems to be the common form in the region, I hunted over the ground for the yellow form of *Amanita rubescens* and for Ravenel's Boletus, which I remembered seeing in that particular patch of woods three years ago. They were not there this time. In fact *Boletus Ravenelii* is so disappointingly rare about Boston that very few collectors know the beauty of it except by hearsay. Once seen, its exquisite, powdery yellow veil, that so long masks the tubes, and the contrast between the sulphur yellow of the stem and the dull red of the pileus linger in the memory and make one eager to find it again. Had there been time to reach a pine grove, we should also have sought its near relative, *B. hemichrysus*, whose dusty-looking, soft, tawny-golden pileus is so conspicuous on the trunk or at the base of a pine — when you can find it. I have collected it a mile or two to the east, in Quincy, and a damaged specimen from Canton or near there, turned up at the exhibition on the day following our excursion. All collectors should hunt carefully for these two Boleti in early August, and preserve and report those found.

Making our way back to the road through a tangled thicket covering boggy ground that would have been impassable dry-shod in an ordinary season, and picking up a handful of *Lactarius subdulcis*, another of *L. griseus*, which is not frequent hereabouts, and one or two pale specimens of *L. chrysorheus*, we passed to the other side and plunged into the shade of a bog that is less densely overgrown and usually very wet. Here were one or two *Leptonias* and *Inocybes*, dull colored and perplexing, and with them, always a joy to the eyes, Peck's *Entoloma cuspidatum*, a plant not rare about Boston, but collected only by those who insist on braving the mosquitoes and the wet of sphagnum bogs. To be fully appreciated, the pale yellow delicate fruits of this fungus, each tipped with an abrupt cusp, must be seen rearing their frail caps above the soft masses of sphagnum in which their stalks are buried. Were it not for an occasional hint of salmon on the mature gills, the thought that they are pink-spored would hardly occur to one.

Beyond the bog our objective point was a bit of moist ground higher up, where last year grew abundance of *Boletinus decipiens*. Careful search, however, failed to discover it, and perhaps we were too early, for August 16, was the date in 1899. *Boletus bicolor* was fruiting, a fungus very easily mistaken for *B. miniato-olivaceus* var. *sensibilis*, on account of its color, pink and yellow in the older specimens, its large, soft caps, and its odor, which to some suggests the smell of sulphur, to others that of hickory nuts. The red stem, yellow at the top, and the scarcely changing yellow flesh mark *B. bicolor*. The other with the long name, has a yellow stem and changes quickly to blue. Here also were two fruits of the anomalous *Paxillus paradoxus*, half agaric and half polypore, with soft red pileus and general suggestion of *Boletus* in tint and texture, and yellow fleshy lamellae with conspicuous transverse partitions, in this case less porous and so less like *Boletinus* than usual.

Warned by a rapidly darkening sky, and by approaching shocks of thunder, we cut short our search and hurried back to the road, where we found shelter from the shower that speedily followed. Satisfied that we had demonstrated the existence of toadstools even in a dry, hot season, we were content to let the homeward car carry us within a few rods of a wooded hill where we might have found *Lactarius luteolus*, *Craterellus Cantharellus*, *Boletus Peckii*, *Cantharellus minor*, and *Cyclomyces Greenii*, all of which have been collected there, and perhaps were waiting for us as we passed. At a quarter to six we were back again on sterile Boston pavements.

PLANTAGO ELONGATA IN RHODE ISLAND. — In the July number of RHODORA I observe a brief communication on the occurrence of *Plantago elongata* Pursh, or properly, as it seems to me, following the unbroken usage of over fifty years, *P. pusilla* Nutt.

About 1871 I found the plant along the highway leading from East Greenwich, Rhode Island, to the famous forge of General Greene. About a quarter of a mile north of the forge, the road passed over a sort of gravelly common, where it was quite abundant.

A year or two afterwards I found it about half a mile south of East Greenwich, on the road to Hunt's bridge. — J. W. CONGDON, Mariposa, Cal.